focus:

The Internally Displaced

Refugees

UNHCR

United Nations
High Commissioner
for Refugees

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Cover: Bosnian residents of Gorazde watching the arrival of the first buses from Sarajevo following the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Photo: UNHCR / R. LeMoyne

The Internally Displaced

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Internally displaced persons

The hidden face of the refugee problem

In 1972, when the civil war in Sudan came to an end, there were half a million displaced persons in the southern part of the country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was given the responsibility of coordinating humanitarian efforts aimed at returning and resettling these displaced people within their own country. It was a relatively new experience for UNHCR, whose specific mandate is to protect and assist refugees — those who have crossed international borders — not the internally displaced.

Since the early 1970s, UNHCR has been involved in numerous operations on behalf of internally displaced persons, who today actually outnumber the world's 15 million ▶

refugees. By 1996, the organization had been involved in almost 30 such IDP operations on several continents *(see page 6)*.

Since the beginning of this decade, the importance of UNHCR's role in support of displaced persons has reached unprecedented proportions.

We are all still haunted by the terrible images of children and elderly people shivering in the snows of the Kurd mountains of northern Iraq. In the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, the Iraqi offensive against the Kurdish populations in the north of the country had pushed 1 million people toward the Turkish border, which was hermetically closed to them. Only by dint of a considerable effort by the international community, coupled with UNHCR's expertise in coordinating aid, was it possible to avoid disaster and to work towards returning the displaced persons safely to their home villages.

A crowd of internally displaced people and returnees gather around an office for handicapped victims of war in Kunduz, Afghanistan.

UNHCR / A. HOLLMANN

Still, the most spectacular and best-known operation for displaced persons has been in ex-Yugoslavia, where UNHCR was lead agency for all U.N. humanitarian operations throughout 43 months of conflict, providing help and protection to nearly 4 million victims of war and persecution *(see page 20)*.

In the course of the last six years, UNHCR has also been called upon to help displaced persons in several other regions, among them Chechens, Azerbaijanis, Tajiks and Afghans.

Today, of the 27 million people presently under UNHCR responsibility worldwide, nearly 6 million are displaced persons. There is nothing very surprising about that. Like the refugees who are under UNHCR protection, displaced persons are the victims of armed conflict, discrimination or persecution. Some say they are refugees in all but name.

From a legal point of view, however, the fact that these victims have not crossed an international border is extremely significant. In fact, they do not enjoy the same rights as refugees, since the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees specifically defines refugees as "being outside their country of nationality (...) or of habitual residence." But above and beyond the strict legal definitions, the ability of international organizations like UNHCR to intervene is very much determined by the presence or not of a frontier between the displaced persons and the authorities of their home country. Sovereign states are often unwilling to allow the international community to intervene in problems affecting their own citizens within their national boundaries.

Moreover, the operational and practical difficulties involved in such intervention cannot be underestimated. By definition, working with internally displaced persons means working under dangerous conditions, often near or even in the middle of a combat zone — much closer, in any case, to the battlefield than would be any refugee camp.

In any armed conflict, and particularly those with ethnic or reli-

gious underpinnings, the humanitarian needs are immense — and the means to satisfy those needs within the conflict area are severely limited. This is why UNHCR must strongly emphasize that asylum beyond the borders, for those who manage to reach this haven, is a form of protection that so far has no equivalent inside territories devastated by war or persecution.

Internally displaced civilian populations move from one place to another, seeking safety and protection inside their own country. Sometimes they find a degree of security, but the price they invariably pay is that of being completely uprooted — of losing their homes, their jobs and their livelihoods. More often than not for these people, interior exile leads only to more suffering, insecurity, harassment and persecution. Increasingly, the displacement of civilian populations — under the guise of "ethnic cleansing" or some other pretext — is no longer a byproduct of war, but the very goal thereof.

And all too often, displaced persons are suspected of allegiance to an enemy clan or political group. Almost always they are caught in the crossfire and become pawns in a sordid bargaining game. They are forced by one side to give military service, and accused by the other of treason. In general, it is virtually impossible for these displaced persons to maintain any sort of "neutrality." They are caught in a no-win situation.

On top of all this, they face the problems of being uprooted, homeless and packed into areas with few resources — problems that UNHCR is all too familiar with in its work with refugees. In fact, UNHCR's experience in dealing with these very same types of problems on behalf of refugees has prepared it, over the years, to make a real contribution for the internally displaced in many countries, including Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tajikistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Azerbaijan. But UNHCR's work on behalf of the internally displaced does nothing to diminish the equally important contributions of other international organizations, particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross *(see page 28)*.

How does UNHCR approach the problem of internal displacement? Often, it is in the context of preparing for a refugee repatriation operation that UNHCR comes into contact with the plight of "displaced persons" who may already be living in the area of planned return. The attention paid to these displaced populations in the potential returnee settlement areas is of primary importance in ensuring lasting reintegration. When large numbers of refugees return to their country, it is often impossible and nearly always counterproductive and nearsighted to care only for them, while ignor- ▶

CRITERIA FOR UNHCR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED

UNHCR's mandate is to protect and seek durable solutions for "refugees" — those who have crossed international borders. Since the internally displaced remain within the boundaries of their own country, they are not considered "refugees" under the UNHCR Statute or under relevant international or regional legal instruments. In recent years, however, UNHCR has been involved in programs for the internally displaced under certain specific conditions. The evolution of these criteria has been gradual, and UNHCR stresses that their application cannot be automatic in every case.

The U.N. General Assembly has set out two mandatory requirements for UNHCR involvement in programs on behalf of the internally displaced. There must be:

- a specific request from the U.N. Secretary-General, or a competent principal organ of the United Nations, such as the General-Assembly, Security Council or Economic and Social Council;
- consent from the concerned state.

The High Commissioner's limited mandate to undertake activities on behalf of the internally displaced is both conditional and, in principle, discretionary. In addition to the above requirements, UNHCR's Executive Committee has called for due regard to be paid to the availability of resources, which must be understood to include not only funds, but also institutional capacity and sufficient qualified staff. The Executive Committee has also reiterated that "UNHCR's activities in the field of prevention must be complementary to its international protection responsibilities and consistent with the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law and that the institution of asylum must not in any way be undermined."

Together with the above requirements and considerations, there are certain preconditions that UNHCR considers essential for its involvement with the internally displaced. These are:

- UNHCR's involvement must not in any way detract from the possibility to seek and to obtain asylum;
- UNHCR must have full and unhindered access to the affected population;
- adequate provision must be made for the security of staff of UNHCR and its operating partners and for acceptable operating conditions;
- UNHCR's involvement should have the consent of all concerned parties and enjoy the support of the international community.

But given the magnitude of the problem of displacement worldwide, it is obvious that UNHCR cannot assume responsibility in every situation where its involvement is sought. It has been necessary for UNHCR to further refine its operational criteria, to include considering action on behalf of the internally displaced in situations where there is a direct link with UNHCR's activities under its basic mandate to protect refugees and to seek solutions to refugee problems. Such situations include those where:

- internally displaced populations are present in or returning to the same areas as repatriating refugees, or areas to which refugees are expected to return;
- refugees and displaced persons in similar circumstances are present and in need of humanitarian assistance and/or protection in the same area of a country of asylum;
- the same causes have produced both internal displacement and refugee flows and there are operational or humanitarian advantages in addressing the problems within a single operation, including, for example, a "cross-border" component;
- there is a potential for cross-border movement, and the provision of humanitarian assistance and/or protection to internally displaced persons may enable them to remain in safety in their own country.

MAIN UNHCR OPERATIONS FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Since 1971, UNHCR has been involved in some 30 operations aimed at assisting internally displaced persons. Some of the more significant operations include:

- **Pakistan - 1971:** Violence in eastern Pakistan forced some 10 million refugees to flee towards India. The Indian government appealed to the U.N. Secretary-General for help. He designated UNHCR as the "focal point" of United Nations relief assistance in India. Following the amnesty decreed by the Pakistan government and the recognition of Bangladesh, repatriation began in January of 1972. Working out of its office in Dacca, UNHCR brought relief not only to the returnees but to the displaced persons as well.

- **Sudan - 1972:** The civil war, which forced 180,000 refugees to flee Sudan and 500,000 others to take refuge in the southern region, ended with the signing of the Addis Ababa Accords. UNHCR found itself at the head of the assistance program - food, transportation and communications – for the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons.

- **Cyprus - 1974:** The invasion of Cyprus caused the displacement of 225,000 persons. UNHCR acted as coordinator of the humanitarian relief effort rather than as the agency responsible for refugees.

- **Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique - 1974:** UNHCR was asked to include displaced persons in its repatriation programs for these former Portuguese colonies.

- **Laos, Viet Nam - 1975:** At least 33,000 displaced persons received help through UNHCR's resettlement program in Laos. Contributions for the civilian population of South Viet Nam were channelled through UNHCR, among others.

- **Ethiopia - 1979:** The Ethiopian government estimated that 750,000 persons were displaced in the Ogaden region. UNHCR was called upon to provide aid to 150,000 of the neediest among them.

- **Uganda - 1979:** The civil war uprooted 250,000 persons. At the government's request, UNHCR coordinated a program of emergency humanitarian assistance for the displaced persons and the voluntary repatriation of those who had left the country.

- **Zimbabwe - 1980:** UNHCR coordinated the rehabilitation program for 660,000 returnees and displaced persons.

- **Chad - 1981:** UNHCR came to the rescue of 50,000 internally displaced persons. It was practically impossible to distinguish between returnees and displaced persons.

- **Lebanon - 1982:** The Israeli invasion prompted 100,000 families to leave their homes. UNHCR was already helping about 2,900 refugees, among whom were Ethiopians, stateless Assyrians, and Afghans.

- **Nicaragua - 1990:** After the February elections, 70,000 refugees returned to the country. UNHCR launched a combined repatriation-reintegration program to help not only returnees, but also demobilized soldiers and displaced persons who were returning to their home regions. During the implementation of this program, the first Quick Impact Projects (QIP) were tested.

- **Sri Lanka - 1990:** Since 1983, the conflict between Tamil separatists and the Colombo government had displaced more than 600,000 persons. In 1990, UNHCR set up two Open Relief Centers that provided temporary shelter, food and medicine for the persons displaced by the conflict.

- **Iraq - 1991:** UNHCR's humanitarian relief effort for the displaced Kurdish population in the north of the country in the aftermath of the Gulf War addressed three basic needs: distribution of emergency relief – water, food, tents, blankets, medical care – for the displaced persons waiting to return; rehabilitation of their dwellings so as to enable them to go back home; and establishment of a two-week supply of food and medicine for 500,000 persons in case of attacks or forcible population movements.

- **Former Yugoslavia - 1991:** UNHCR was mandated by the U.N. Secretary-General to take full responsibility for United Nations humanitarian aid to the displaced populations. The displaced persons thus placed under UNHCR care included former Serbian residents of the Krajina region of Croatia and 1.3 million victims of war and "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia.

- **Afghanistan - 1992:** In the wake of the fighting that took place in Kabul in August, UNHCR coordinated an inter-agency relief operation for the 15,000 displaced persons who had escaped to the north of the country. More recently, UNHCR set up a camp at Jalalabad for the 80,000 Afghans who fled renewed fighting in Kabul in January 1994.

- **Azerbaijan, Armenia - 1992:** UNHCR sent out a relief team to provide for the needs – first of 150,000, and then of 300,000 – of the most vulnerable among the 700,000 people in Azerbaijan who had been displaced by the conflict between that country and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh.

- **Sierra Leone - 1992:** At the government's request, UNHCR provided assistance to 500,000 returnees. However, as they are lodged in the same camps as displaced persons, the latter also receive UNHCR help.

- **Liberia - 1991:** UNHCR provides aid for a small fraction of the estimated 1.2 million displaced persons, the majority of whom are camped on the outskirts of Monrovia. Many of the displaced persons have found shelter in the camps for Sierra Leonean refugees. It is impossible to distinguish between these two categories of the population.

- **Angola - 1993:** The High Commissioner has approved a proposal to extend the repatriation program for Angolan refugees to other persons affected by the war – 88,000 of whom are displaced in five of the provinces to which refugees are returning.

- **Georgia - 1993:** UNHCR has officially established its presence in this country and launched an aid program for the 140,000 most vulnerable persons displaced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In the face of numerous problems, UNHCR has also tried to ensure that the rights of the internally displaced to return to Abkhazia are respected.

- **Tajikistan - 1993:** UNHCR's operation is described as "a model for preventing the escalation of population movements." The conflict forced 60,000 Tajiks to flee to Afghanistan. With a view to preparing their return, UNHCR helps and protects the displaced persons who have already returned home.

- **Russian Federation - 1995:** The first UNHCR humanitarian operation on Russian territory began with the conflict in Chechnya and was initially aimed at providing for the most urgent needs of the 220,000 displaced persons in Ingushetia, Northern Ossetia and Daghestan.

▶ ing their nearby compatriots who were internally displaced for many of the same reasons.

The stabilizing, and hence preventive, effect of providing aid to displaced persons cannot be overlooked either. In former Yugoslavia, for example, the desire to prevent further population movements was a prime factor in UNHCR's intervention at the end of 1991, even before the armed conflict had spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On the basis of its rich and varied experience, albeit perhaps not entirely coherent, UNHCR has tried in recent years to set criteria for its intervention in cases of internal displacement. The basic criterion, on which the Executive Committee and the U.N. General Assembly agree, refers to a "link" with a refugee situation. As it was formulated in 1993, by General Assembly Resolution 48/116, UNHCR's expertise can assist displaced persons "especially where [UNHCR's] efforts may contribute to the prevention or the solution of refugee problems."

Other criteria also apply. UNHCR is not authorized to act without the consent of the state concerned (and, if the situation arises, of one or several other parties to the conflict), and its involvement must be based on a request by the General Assembly or the Secretary-General of the United Nations, or even by the Security Council. UNHCR does not have a universal mandate with regard to displaced persons and for that reason, its scope for action is more limited than it is for refugees.

These criteria for UNHCR intervention are logical, and they have not been challenged. But they are also difficult to apply because other factors over which UNHCR has little or no control must also be taken into account. These include the safety of the operation and staff security, as well as limitations on UNHCR's human and financial resources in the face of pressing refugee needs and complex emergency situations elsewhere in the world.

Rwanda provides a good example. UNHCR did not seek to assume

responsibility for around 1 million internally displaced Rwandans in mid-May 1994, as it was already overstreched trying to manage a phenomenal flow of refugees into neighboring countries. Inside Rwanda itself, an inter-agency coordination team was hastily set up, with UNHCR playing a secondary role. It must be recognized that this coordination effort faltered at some point, incapable of preventing a horrendous massacre in the Kibeho camp for internally displaced persons in April 1995. Could UNHCR, alone or with others, have prevented this disaster? No one can honestly be certain. But it is clear that the "protection" aspect of the operation was the weak link of the aid program for the displaced persons at Kibeho and elsewhere in southern Rwanda.

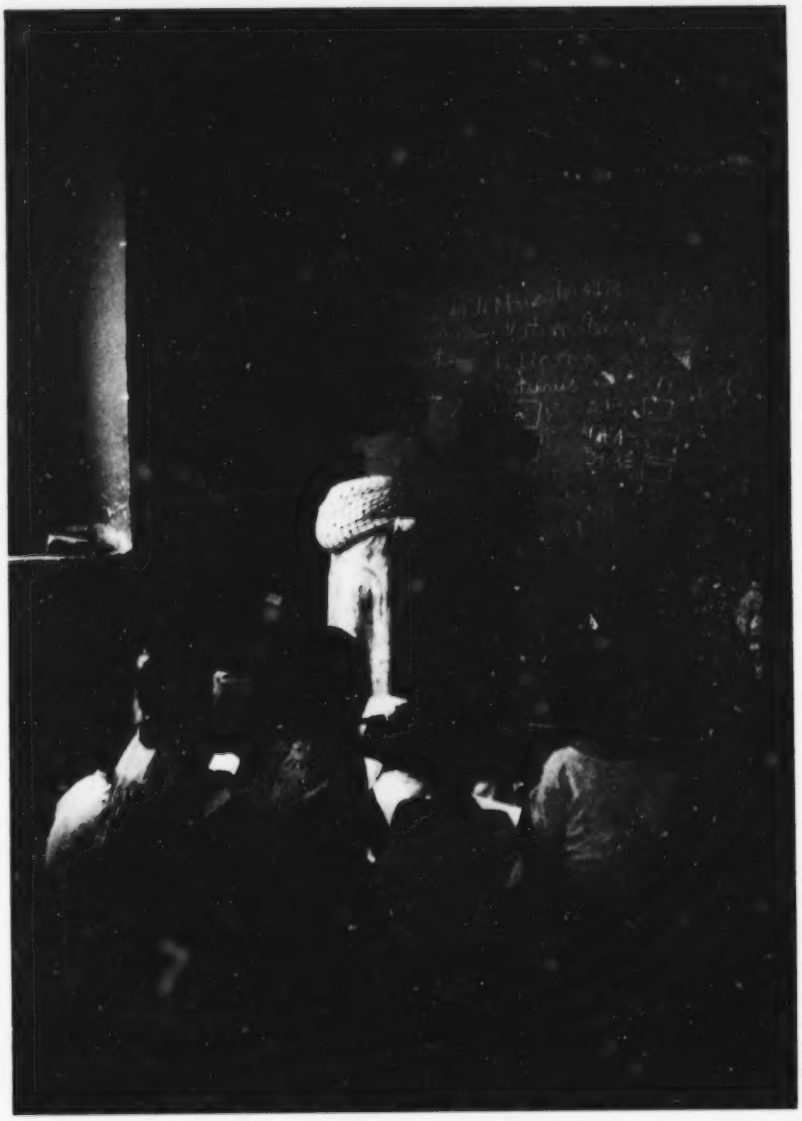
Then there is the case of Chechnya. The neighboring republics of the Russian Federation — mainly Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Daghestan — are currently sheltering some 80,000 people who have been displaced by this merciless conflict. In these republics, is it possible to provide international aid while ignoring blatant violations of the victims' rights? In principle, UNHCR refuses to do so, but it is subjected to heavy constraints. Apart from the difficulties raised by the "host" state, donor governments themselves have shown little interest in the prospect of a long-term humanitarian commitment which combines assistance, protection and the search for solutions.

The sad truth is that too many humanitarian emergencies involving the internally displaced fall into oblivion.

In the face of seemingly inexhaustible needs, the only real option is to bring fully into play international solidarity, as well as complementarity and coordination among the various international entities involved. The political will of states to act is key to this process.

In Russia, in Sudan, in Peru, in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, displaced persons all too often fall through the cracks of the humanitarian system — whether it be a matter of material aid or the protection of human rights. The Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis Deng, has rightly called for a general mobilization to help these often forgotten people. UNHCR and other organizations must contribute to this endeavour, each one providing its own expertise and resources.

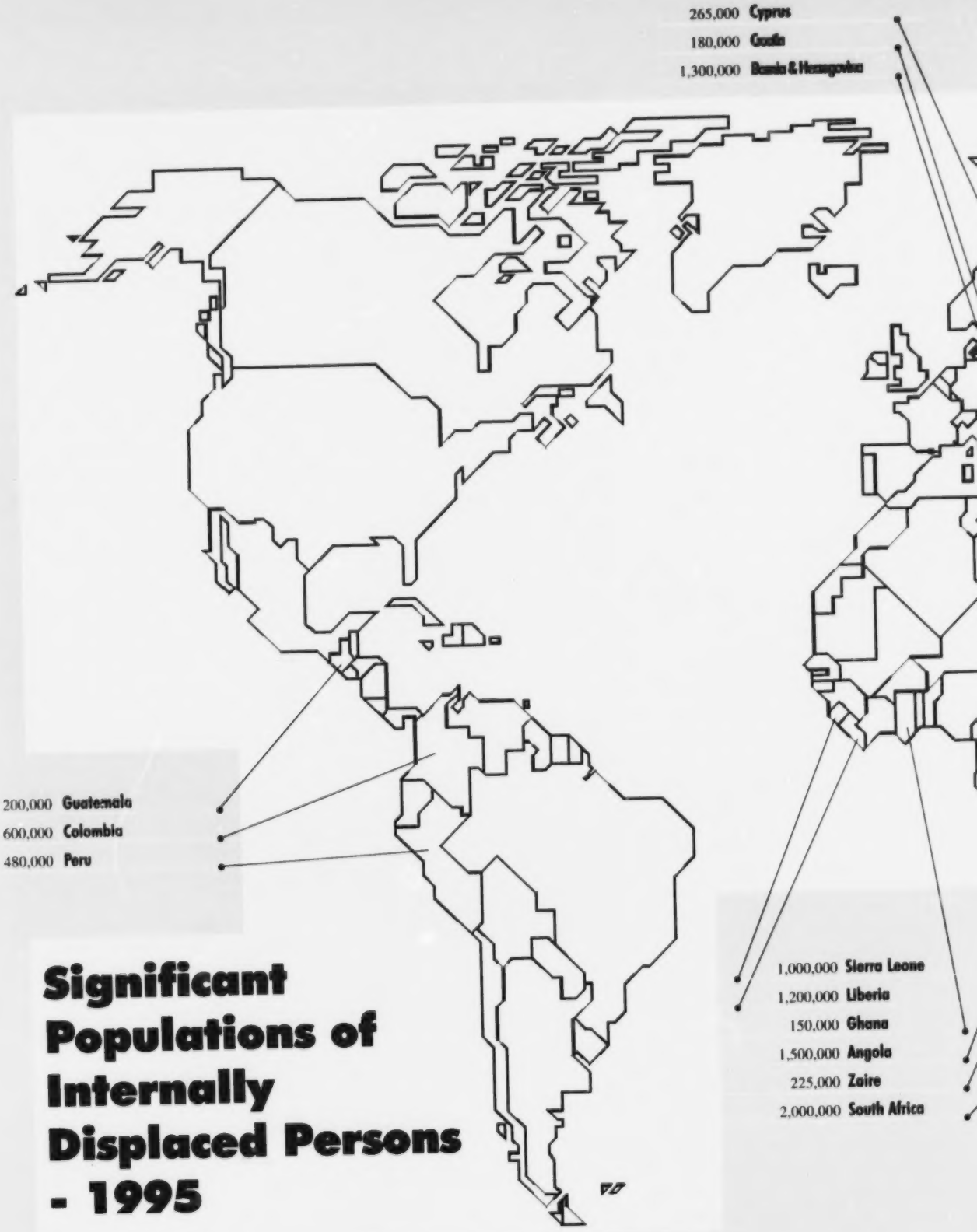
The problem of displaced persons, which is but the reverse side of the refugee problem, is also its dark side. It is high time that it be exposed to the light of day.



UNHCR / C. Sattler

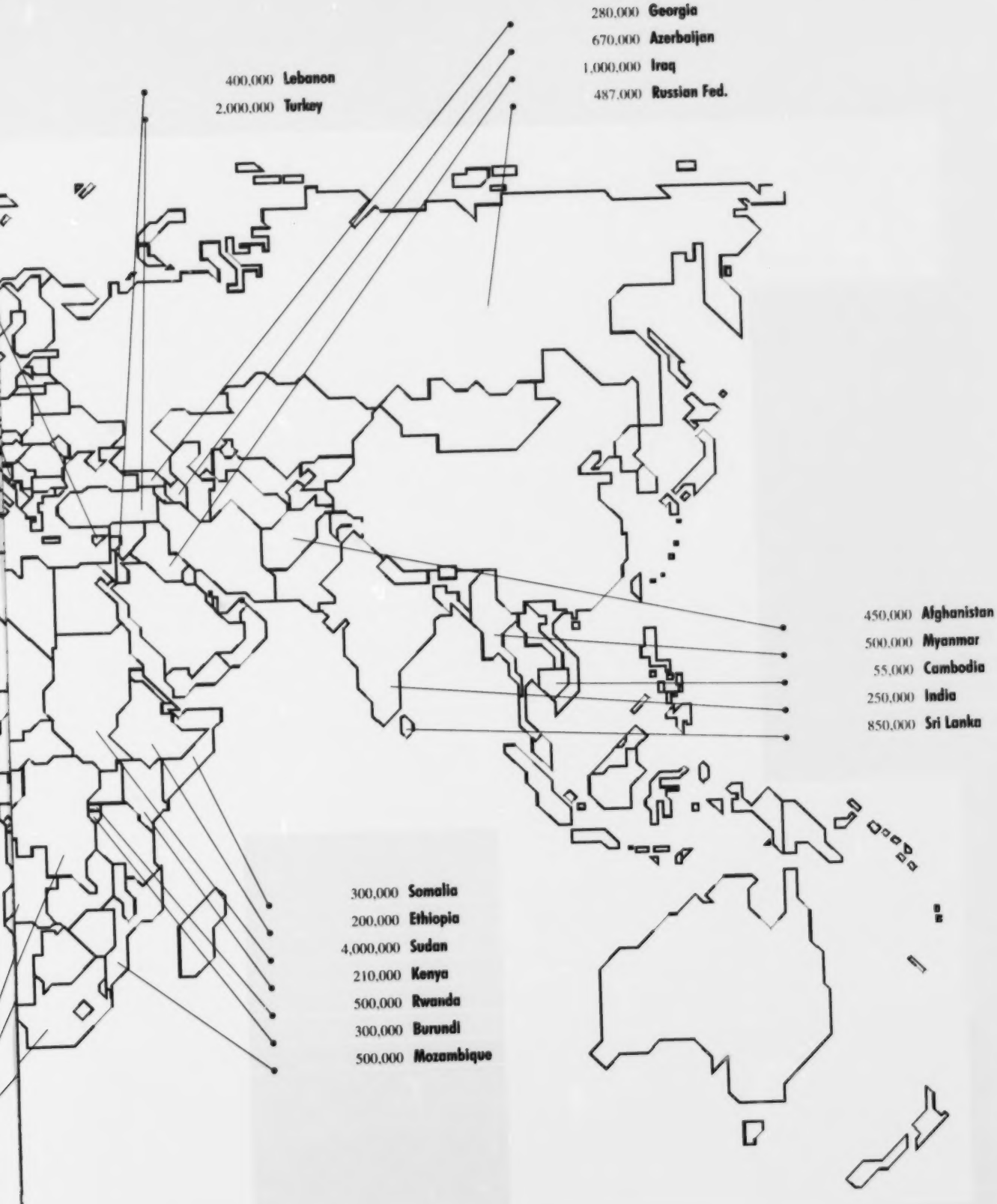
Internally displaced Angolan children at an orphanage assisted by Save the Children Fund near Huambo. A wall serves as makesbift blackboard.

Jean-François Durieux
Chief, Promotion of Refugee Law Section, UNHCR Division of International Protection



Significant Populations of Internally Displaced Persons - 1995

Sources: U.S. Committee for Refugees; UNHCR.


280,000 Georgia
670,000 Azerbaijan
1,000,000 Iraq
487,000 Russian Fed.
400,000 Lebanon
2,000,000 Turkey
450,000 Afghanistan
500,000 Myanmar
55,000 Cambodia
250,000 India
850,000 Sri Lanka
300,000 Somalia
200,000 Ethiopia
4,000,000 Sudan
210,000 Kenya
500,000 Rwanda
300,000 Burundi
500,000 Mozambique

Liberia

So close, yet so far

Surveying the gutted, bullet-scarred building in downtown Monrovia that he and 1,500 other displaced Liberians must at least temporarily call home, Maurice D. Leaye says he feels like a foreigner in the heart of his own country.

"Look at the conditions people must live in here," he complains. "There is no water, no electricity, not even sanitation. A real pigsty. Look at our children! They're undernourished and sick, but they don't get any medical care. It seems as though the whole world has forgotten us."

The 35-year-old Leaye has lived in the filthy, ramshackle building in the center of Liberia's capital for the last five years. Like thousands of his fellow citizens, Leaye had to suddenly leave his home in Grand Geddeh county on the Liberian-Ivorian border to escape fighting between the rebels of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, and the forces loyal to former President Samuel Kanyon Doe. After trekking several days through forests and rubber plantations, he arrived in Monrovia, which was under the control of ECOMOG, the West African peace-keeping force.

Maurice D. Leaye may well be a Liberian, but he soon found that it doesn't count for much these days, not even in the capital. He had no friends, no relatives, no connections. In the end, Leaye landed along with many hundreds of other displaced people in Libyan House, a miserable, nine-story blue and white building on Pan Africa Plaza, facing Monrovia City Hall. "The majority of the people living here are children," explained Leaye, who this day served as spokesman for the 1,500 all-but-forgotten people trying to survive in Libyan House. "Except for the emergency rations that were handed out just once at the very beginning, we have received practically nothing since 1991."

Mariama Dorley's husband and one of her children were murdered by rebels. Unable to cope, the 34-year-old Dorley gathered up her scanty belongings one night in May 1994 and walked, with her five remaining children, the 75 kms from her native village, Tubmanburg, to the capital. Since then, she has been living with her family in Zuanah Town, a huge camp on the outskirts of Monrovia where Sierra Leonean refugees and displaced Liberians live side-by-side. "I am waiting for peace to return in order to go home," she says.

Moses B.D. Horace was a civil servant in the Gbarnga region until 1992, when the rebels stormed into the area, killing and looting everything within reach. After a harrowing, weeklong trek, Horace, his wife and their eight children ended up in the four-storey "MoH" building in the Congo-Town district of Monrovia. Once the headquarters of the Ministry of Health, the building has now been transformed into a shelter for 5,000 refugees and displaced city dwellers. Despite its name, there is nothing healthy about the building — it provides nothing but a roof. "There is nothing to eat here, nothing good to eat," Horace explains. "I sleep on the bare floor with my children and it breaks my heart to see them fading away, without a crumb to eat."

In the last few years, many thousands like Maurice D. Leaye, Mariama Dorley and Moses B.D Horace, have poured into Monrovia. Most, like 70-year-old Fallah Johnson, lost everything in flight. Johnson, from Lofah county on the Liberian-Guinean border, said his family was massacred by armed groups who also burned down his house and everything in it. Barely scraping by since 1992 in the MoH, he hopes only to live long enough to once again see his native region and those friends

The ground floor of the "MoH" building, which is jammed with displaced people, in Monrovia.

who have somehow survived the tragedy of Liberia's brutal civil war.

Like the 750,000 Liberian refugees who managed to flee to Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, the troubles of Liberia's internally displaced began in December 1989, when the NPFL rebels took up arms to overthrow the regime of Samuel K. Doe. Caught in the crossfire, many civilians had no option but to head for neighboring countries — especially Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea — or to the capital, which was considered a safe haven once the ECOMOG troops had established control there in 1990. Subsequently, factions proliferated, essentially along ethnic lines, and anarchy reigned, forcing an ever-increasing number of Liberians to flee first to Monrovia and then on to the neighboring countries.

The pre-war population of Monrovia was estimated at 500,000. With the massive inflow of displaced persons, it has practically tripled in six years. "The greatest concentration of displaced persons is found in Monrovia and its outskirts," said Kallu Kalumiya, UNHCR's representative in Liberia. "There are also displaced persons in other areas such as the villages of Buchanan, Kakata and, until recently, around Tubmanburg."

UNHCR's office in Liberia, which opened in 1991, estimates the total number of displaced persons at around 1.2 million, of which 800,000 are in Monrovia or its suburbs; 110,000 in Margibi county, near the capital; 82,000 in Grand Bassa county (whose main city is the port of Buchanan); 80,000 in Cape Mount county, on the Liberian-Sierra Leonean border; and 56,000 and 40,000 respectively in Bong and in Bomi counties.

In the capital, some 150,000 displaced people were fortunate enough to have moved in with relatives. But the majority of newcomers end up in the suburban refugee camps or are crammed into buildings like the MoH or the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs office on Tubman Avenue, Monrovia's main thoroughfare. According to UNHCR staff at a camp in Samukai Town, on Monrovia's outskirts, only 12 percent of the 7,000 persons receiving assistance in the camp are displaced persons — the rest are refugees from Sierra Leone. And at the MoH, there are as many Sierra Leonean refugees as displaced persons. On the other hand, in a former Masonic Temple converted into a makeshift shelter, all 300 residents are displaced persons.

"Nobody pays any attention to us. We aren't as lucky as the Sierra Leonean refugees who are taken under the UNHCR's assistance. We have to fight for survival on our own," asserts Jack Freeman, who lives with his entire family in one of the derelict outbuildings of the white-marble temple. The building was plundered in the violent aftermath of Doe's macabre execution in 1990.

As with internally displaced populations in many parts of the world, most of Liberia's IDPs are, unfortunately, very much on their own. UNHCR has been in the country to help refugees and to map plans for a long-awaited return of those who fled the country. But funding even these mandate activities is difficult, particularly in view of the renewed violence in Monrovia in April, which resulted in the looting of many aid agency offices — UNHCR's included — and the evacuations of some staff members. "No international humanitarian agency has a specific mandate to care for displaced persons," explained Kalumiya, UNHCR's representative in Liberia.

In fact, a distinction can be drawn between the autonomous displaced persons scattered around the city and their displaced counterparts who live in refugee camps like Samukai Town or "VOA-1" and "VOA-2" (thus designated because they are located in the vicinity of the old premises of the Voice of America). Totally on their own, the life of an autonomous displaced person is a daily struggle for survival. Like Jack Freeman, they are destitute, show symp- ▶

Sierra Leonean refugees and displaced Liberians live side-by-side in Vahun camp, Upper Lofa.

toms of malnutrition, and are prey to the cholera and yellow fever epidemics that frequently sweep this country that after six years of civil war has practically no sanitation infrastructure left. Without schooling, displaced youngsters wander the main streets of the city late into the night — despite the curfew — in search of a pittance.

But those displaced persons who live side-by-side with the Sierra Leonean refugees, on the other hand, suffer hardly any discrimination at all. Like the refugees, they have access to schooling and medical care and they receive food supplies and limited amounts of equipment. They live in such close proximity to the refugees that UNHCR and its partners are constrained to help them, in part to avoid tensions between the groups.

Nevertheless, these "fortunate ones" who live in the refugee camps depend on real inter-agency cooperation and on the assistance of the NGOs for their survival. The World Food Program and the Food and Agricultural Organization supply food for the displaced Liberians. UNICEF provides water supplies, as well as education and infant vaccinations. The World Health Organization contributes preventive medicine and health care services. UNHCR adds its expertise in the areas of agriculture and education, and occasionally provides equipment. Several local and foreign NGOs collaborate as well. These include MSF-Holland, MSF-France, AICF, ADRA and the Liberian Red Cross.

Despite the hardships, many of the displaced choose not to live around the refugee camps, preferring instead to seek work in the city.

In a few other situations, UNHCR has provided what aid it can to displaced people as well as refugees in Liberia. In December and January, for example, about 13,000 IDPs flooded into the city along with 1,000 Sierra Leonean refugees who were fleeing fighting between ECOMOG troops and rebels of the ULIMO-J faction. UNHCR made no distinction between refugees and displaced persons in the distribution of emergency aid to these people. But only lasting peace will end the tragic plight of Liberia's 1.2 million displaced people.

Francis Kpatindé

Interview

Dr. Francis M. Deng
Advocate for the uprooted

Dr. Francis M. Deng was appointed in 1992 as Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons. In this interview with **Refugees**, *Dr. Deng talks about his work and the plight of the world's estimated 30 million internally displaced people.*

QUESTION: When and why was your position established?

ANSWER: My appointment was in response to the mounting crisis of internal displacement worldwide.

The rapid escalation of internal conflicts, civil wars and ethnic strife at the end of the Cold War resulted in a marked increase in the number of persons displaced within the borders of their own countries.

By 1992, the year of my appointment, the total number of internally displaced persons had climbed to about 24 million, surpassing that of refugees.

No one organization had responsibility for the internally displaced and substantial numbers were not receiving adequate protection or assistance.

Many were deprived of food and health services, caught up in internal strife, and subjected to severe human rights abuse.

Some of the highest mortality rates ever recorded during humanitarian emergencies involved situations of internal displacement.

Because of the magnitude of the crisis, the inadequacy of the response system, and the urgent need for international remedies, a number of concerned non-governmental organizations and governments urged the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to take action.

The U.N. Secretary-General, in response to the Commission's request, asked me to serve as his Representative on Internally Displaced Persons.

What activities do you undertake under your mandate?

One area that has become vitally important to my mandate is making on-site visits to countries with serious problems of internal displacement in order to explore first-hand the conditions in which internally displaced persons live. Since my appointment in 1992, I have paid visits to ten countries, have established dialogues with the governments concerned, and have consulted with agencies and organizations involved with the displaced and with the displaced themselves. After each visit a report is prepared, with recommendations for governments and the international community for improving the conditions of the internally displaced. My initial visits were to the former Yugoslavia, the Russian Federation, Somalia, Sudan and El Salvador, in that order. My most recent visits have been to Sri Lanka, Burundi, Rwanda, Colombia and Peru, and I will be visiting Tajikistan shortly.

Another important element of the mandate is the development of a legal framework to enhance protection for the internally displaced. Specifically, I have been asked to study the extent to which internally displaced ▶

persons are adequately covered by international human rights and humanitarian law — and refugee law by analogy — and to propose remedies for increased legal protection.

I have also been requested to analyze current institutional arrangements for the internally displaced at the international, regional and non-governmental levels and to recommend how existing arrangements could more effectively address the protection, assistance and development needs of the internally displaced.

Focusing attention on the needs of internally displaced women and children is another aspect of the mandate and the development of strategies for their better protection.

Have you had the support and resources required to do your job?

The mandate of the Representative encompasses a broad range of human rights and humanitarian activities which go well beyond the scope and resources of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, its originating body, or the Center for Human Rights, which services it. To date, the Center has been able to provide only very limited staff support and resources toward the activities of the mandate. As a result, I have had to turn to concerned governments, NGOs, academic institutions, independent experts and foundations for assistance and support. The U.N. General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights have encouraged my developing ties with organizations and groups outside the U.N. system because of the enormous needs of internally displaced populations and the far-reaching objectives of the mandate. I am currently working on developing means of enhancing the capacity of the mandate to be more effective in pursuing its objectives.

What are the disparities in treatment of refugees versus IDPs?

I have found considerable discrepancy in the ways in which refugees and internally displaced persons are perceived and treated by the international community, even when they face similar problems and sometimes in virtually the same circumstances. In Burundi, for example, the level of international involvement with refugees from Rwanda was far higher than with those who were internally displaced. In camps that I visited in September 1994, many of the internally displaced did not have adequate shelter even though the rainy season was approaching.

Dysentery and lack of clean water, pumps, tents, blankets, medicines and general health care were some of the more serious problems. The refugee camps visited by comparison had huts covered with plastic sheeting as well as water, cooking materials, and health services. When I brought this case to the attention of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in New York, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees responded quite positively and undertook to look into the matter. But there are other countries where there are sharp disparities as well. In Sudan, the internally displaced live under conditions of one of the worst civil wars in Africa, while refugees from other countries have available to them a well-developed international system of protection and assistance.

What are the constraints in dealing with IDPs?

Overwhelmingly, the internally displaced live under adverse conditions of a hostile domestic environment, where their access to protection and assistance is constrained by national sovereignty. In many countries they are ignored or at worst perceived as the "enemy," either by their association with an identifiable insurgent group, or more generally with an ethnic, cultural or social group perceived as inferior, "threatening" or simply "other." The result is that many internally displaced persons fall into a vacuum of responsibility within the state.

In my dialogues with governments, I have repeatedly emphasized that national sovereignty carries with it certain responsibilities toward those within its jurisdiction. If governments are unable to discharge their responsibilities to provide adequate protection and assistance, they are expected to invite, or at least accept, international cooperation to supplement their own efforts. On the other hand, where governments or controlling authorities are unwilling to live up to their responsibilities and are not receptive to international assistance, the international community should be assertive in filling the vacuum of responsibility for those in need.

In Sudan, for example, where the world's largest number of internally displaced persons can be found, there are problems of access to both the millions of internally displaced in the south, under the control of rebel movements, and the hundreds of thousands who are internally displaced in the north under government control. Every effort should be made by the international community to try to reach those in need on all sides of the conflict. International and regional efforts at conflict resolution are also essential because in the end this is the most effective way to find solutions for displacement.

Should UNHCR's mandate be further expanded to include IDPs?

Within the U.N. system, UNHCR is no doubt the institution best equipped legally and operationally to deal with the internally displaced. However, as the High Commissioner has repeatedly pointed out, the magnitude of the problem far exceeds the capacity and resources of UNHCR or any other single agency. The needs of internally displaced persons, totalling about 30 million people, span the entire range of U.N. agencies — from emergency

assistance to human rights protection to development aid. Since there already exist many resources and capacities in these areas, collaborative arrangements should be strengthened among the different relief, development and human rights organizations that already play a role with the displaced. Should these collaborative arrangements, however, fail to achieve effective coordination and provide adequate protection and assistance, then the creation of a new U.N. agency exclusively responsible for the internally displaced or the enlargement of the mandate of UNHCR should be considered.

What are your main accomplishments to date in your role as Representative?

Because I am but a single individual with limited institutional support and no operational authority, my role is essentially that of a catalyst and advocate, helping to raise international awareness to the plight of the internally displaced and to the need for governments, international organizations and NGOs to find solutions. In some cases, visits to countries have produced tangible results for the internally displaced. The mere fact of a visit generally serves to attract the attention not only of the government but also of other elements of the society, which generates a discourse that stimulates internal activities to deal with the problem.

Progress has also taken place in the institutional area. U.N. agencies, regional organizations and NGOs have increasingly expanded their activities with regard to the internally displaced, and structurally, institutions are now in place which have begun to function as coordinating organs and which promise to bring coherence into the international system for better addressing assistance, protection and development for the internally displaced.

In the area of legal protection, a Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms applicable to the internally displaced has been completed by a team of highly accredited institutions and experts with whom I have worked closely for several years. The compilation is currently before the Commission on Human Rights. It analyzes existing law, identifies areas in which human rights and humanitarian law fail to provide sufficient protection and proposes remedies.

What still needs to be done?

In addition to the compilation of norms mentioned above, a specific set of legal standards tailored to the needs of the internally displaced must be developed. Although there is extensive coverage in existing international law for the internally displaced, there is no one instrument that details those provisions and there are gaps in the law that need to be addressed. A body of legal principles is needed to restate and clarify existing law and address the shortcomings in the law. This will assist international agencies and NGOs in the field to provide protection for the internally displaced and also raise the level of international awareness of the problem.

Greater attention also needs to be paid to increasing the physical security of the internally displaced. More visible international presence in camps or in areas where internally displaced persons congregrate can prove essential to increasing protection for the displaced and to restoring confidence for return. The U.N. human rights system needs to be strengthened to shoulder more of this responsibility, but humanitarian agencies and regional bodies should also assume a more pronounced protection role.

Overall, institutional arrangements will need to be improved to ensure that protection and assistance are more adequately provided by the international community, whose uneven presence in countries with problems of internal displacement has resulted in the needs of internally displaced persons being met to varying degrees in some countries, but largely neglected or not addressed at all in others.

An information center needs to be established to ensure more systematic monitoring of internal displacement on a worldwide basis. There are at least 35 to 40 countries with serious problems of internal displacement whose conditions have to be examined so that informed policy decisions can be made.

Special programs need to be developed for internally displaced women and children. Whereas UNHCR and various NGOs monitor the implementation of protection guidelines with respect to refugee women and children, no comparable monitoring is done of the conditions of the internally displaced. Yet internally displaced women and children are often the most traumatized and vulnerable in situations of internal conflict. Special strategies are needed for single women and women heads of household, and for unaccompanied children, many of whom have undergone systematic human rights abuse during conflict situations.

While the tendency in dealing with the displaced has been to focus on emergency assistance, and to a lesser extent protection, it is also essential to look beyond this phase to rehabilitation, reconstruction and longer-term development. Relief and development agencies and the international financial institutions should be encouraged to increase their involvement with uprooted populations whose integration will prove essential to peace and stability in the nation as a whole.

As a final comment, I would note that it would be easy to be overwhelmed into despair by the magnitude of the task ahead; instead, we must all operate on the principle of doing what is possible, despite all the constraints. Toward that end, I plan to continue to work closely with governments, U.N. agencies and the international community to ensure that the basic human needs and rights of the uprooted are not neglected.

Danger: Safe areas

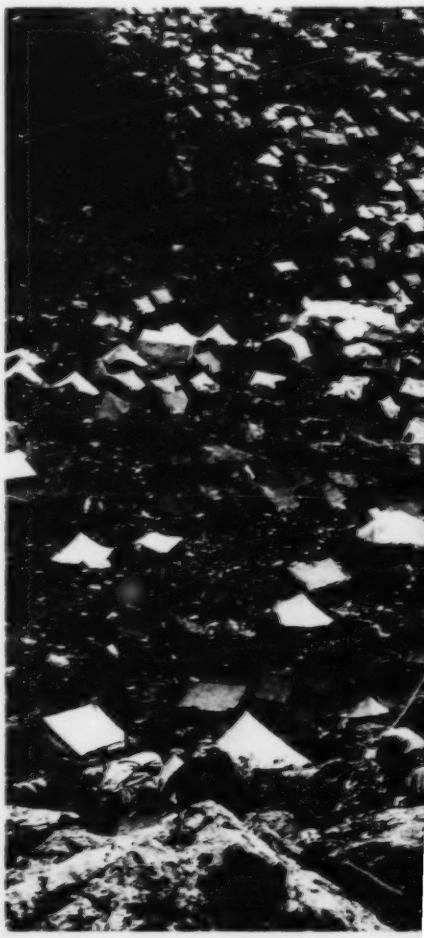
After the gruesome human rights violations that accompanied Bosnian Serb military victories over the U.N. safe areas in Srebrenica and Zepa in July 1995, Tadeusz Mazowiecki resigned as Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights. Mazowiecki had been an early proponent of security zones in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But he quit, he said, to emphasize that the international community could not continue its policy regarding the safe areas — and to protest the world's hypocrisy over human rights in the former Yugoslavia. Mazowiecki recounted that people who had fled the fallen safe area of Srebrenica turned away from him on learning that he was a human rights envoy of the United Nations.

Mazowiecki's dismay and sense of betrayal were widely echoed. The fall of Srebrenica — which had been supplied by UNHCR with humanitarian aid for much of the war — led to fresh questions about the suitability of safe areas (also termed safety zones) in protecting civilians, including the displaced, in internal conflict.

Experience in this field ranges from Bosnia to Iraq, Rwanda and Sri Lanka, and the terms vary from "open relief centers" to "safe corridors" and "safe havens." The essence of the notion is to establish a location within the disputed territory which is neutral and free of belligerent activity, and to which humanitarian access is guaranteed. In practice, today's safe areas are rarely based on consent of all parties, and they are not necessarily exclusively civilian. In northern Iraq, Bosnia and Rwanda, safe areas did not exclude combatants, and in fact military activities were carried out from or through the zones. The Sri Lankan Open Relief Centers are the closest current equivalent of the traditional safety zone concept.

IRAQ:

The safety zone in northern Iraq was created in direct response to a failure of refugee protection. While 1.4 million Kurdish refugees found asylum in Iran after the Gulf war, Turkey has limited its obligations under refugee instruments to accepting refugees from Europe. The international community did not pressure Turkey to allow its 300,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees to stay, or to admit the tens of thousands more who were stranded on a freezing, muddy mountain range on the border. Instead, the international community moved to ensure the Kurds' safety in northern Iraq itself, a safe area described by one commentator as



'Limbo land': displaced Iraqi Kurds near the Turkey/Iraq border, in May 1991.

"limbo land." The decision to establish this zone was taken without the agreement of the Iraqi government.

Safety zones imposed externally can promote political aims under a humanitarian cloak. However legitimate those political aims may be, they contribute to the perception of the safety zone as a punitive or partisan instrument. The creation of a safe haven in northern Iraq was attractive to some states for reasons extraneous to humanitarian need, including the desire to censure Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and its appalling human rights record (including the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds).

The safe haven in northern Iraq was not demilitarized and it has been vulnerable to attack from Turkey, which has cited the activities of Turkish Kurd guerrillas based in northern Iraq. Attacks by Iraqi government forces outside the safe haven are alleged to have forced more Kurds to flee into it in recent years. In addition, internal struggles among Kurdish groups have had a destabilizing effect, and call into question the purpose of the safe haven. In any case, continued protection remains contingent on the willingness of Western powers to maintain a credible and sufficient level of threat. This, in turn, is less closely linked to the well-being of the safe area's inhabitants than it is to whether or not Saddam Hussein remains in power; to the continued maintenance of the U.S. airbase in Turkey; and to the attitude of regional powers.

BOSNIA:

When the idea of establishing safe haven zones in Bosnia was first floated in 1992, some governments favored it as a way of keeping would-be refugees within former Yugoslavia. It was also defended, rather ingenuously, as a principled way of resisting ethnic cleansing (in contrast to facilitating the departure of those threatened with death and persecution). In April 1993, Srebrenica was declared a safe area, followed by Sarajevo, Bihac, Tuzla, Zepa and Gorazde. The Security Council declined the Secretary-General's call for 34,000 soldiers to implement the mandate, and opted instead for 7,600 troops. Successive Force Commanders in Bosnia ruled out the use of air power.

The safe areas were imposed by outside powers, without the consent of the parties on the ground; and they were never demilitarized. When UNPROFOR sought the surrender of weaponry by the Bosnian Muslim population in the enclave (from the Bosnian Serb perspective, a reasonable *quid pro quo*), Security Council members were outraged. Military activities continued out of the safe areas, rendering the Bosnian Serb offensives against Srebrenica and Zepa inevitable.

The declaration of safe areas, the deployment of troops, and the humanitarian relief provided to the enclaves did save lives. In the first instance, however, they allowed the international community to appear to be taking decisive political action when the will to impose protection through military means was lacking.

UNHCR A. Hollmann

RWANDA:

Following the deaths of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi on 6 April 1994 in an airplane crash near Kigali, Rwanda pitched headlong into a well of massacre and mass displacement. Estimates of the number of deaths ranged from half a million to a million. On 21 April, arguably at the moment of greatest need, the Security Council voted to reduce the ranks of the UNAMIR peacekeepers to 270 (after 13 Belgian peacekeepers were killed). Four weeks later, the Security Council voted an expanded role for the peacekeeping force, boosting it to 5,500 people. But there was little support for ▶

▶ putting that resolution into practice and, on 22 June, the Security Council authorized France to deploy a "temporary multinational force" to establish secure humanitarian areas. The duration of the deployment was limited to two months.

On 2 July, Operation Turquoise created a "safe humanitarian zone" in southwest Rwanda, covering one-fifth of the country. French officials announced that a million refugees had found protection there. When, in late August, Operation Turquoise came to an end, UNAMIR was deployed in the area. At that time, an estimated 50,000 internally displaced people remained in 10 camps in the zone, of which Kibeho camp was the largest. As the months passed, the Rwandan government grew impatient at the slow pace with which the internally displaced were returning home. There were fears that the zone was a conduit for arms to the former Rwandan regime, and there were allegations that the internally displaced who had taken refuge there were *génocideurs*. In late February, Kibeho camp (which then housed between 84,000 and 120,000 people) was regarded by the government as "a center of hostility and a threat to internal security." An operation to move the displaced home ended in massacre on 17 April: automatic rifles, machine-guns, grenades and rocket-propelled grenades were deployed against the camp's residents.

Operation Turquoise was a rapid and forceful military intervention which, whatever its motivation, had humanitarian benefits. It stemmed the flow of refugees to Zaire, thus saving many lives given the crisis conditions there. It protected some Tutsis in the zone, though few were left there by the time it was set up; and it protected some Hutu from revenge killings. Operation Turquoise froze the situation at a certain time, after the worst killings had taken place. It ended before anything went seriously wrong.

SRI LANKA:

Since 1987, UNHCR has administered relief supplied by the international community and the government to returning refugees and internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka. In 1990, when fighting resumed after an extended period of calm, UNHCR began using existing centers of relief distribution to provide a "relatively safe environment" to persons needing shelter. This operation was formalized in 1993. Security forces explicitly agreed not to intervene in the camps without prior consultation with UNHCR, and the rebel forces appear to have respected this as an informal engagement. The Open Relief Centers have never been targeted for attack or caught in crossfire.

Many factors set the Sri Lankan Open Relief Centers apart from other recent safe areas. Their establishment was negotiated on the ground, rather than impelled by the will of other states; they are small and the transitory nature of the sanctuary they provide contribute to their relative insignificance as military targets. They are situated in both LTTE and government-controlled areas, and are not associated with territorial claims. There are no restrictions on movement in and out; beneficiaries can stay as long as they want; the population is ethnically mixed, and is not perceived as politicized or militarized.

The centers operate because none of the military forces wish to end their role. They are unprotected; there is no military presence, credible threat, or enforcement measure. Some in UNHCR have argued that the protection offered by the centers is therefore illusory, and qualitatively far inferior to the protection conferred by asylum in another country. These remain valid reasons not to equate safety zone protection with refugee protection. But in practice, faced with the lack of possibilities for flight and the desirability, amid a conflict that waxes and wanes, of staying close to land and property, the Sri Lankans have concurred in finding a *modus vivendi*.

The key issue for UNHCR and human rights advocates who seek to evaluate the safe area concept must be the quality of protection they afford. The belief that adequate protection can be found in a safe area zone could tempt governments to favor the creation of that zone — possibly placing more emphasis on containment than on human rights.

Commentators have already warned that designating safe areas gives governments a pretext for refusing to grant asylum. And, in some cases, safe areas have indeed been established in conditions which have interfered with the right to seek asylum. This would include the outright refusal of asylum by neighboring states; the fact that some zones were surrounded by hostile populations; and the refusal by the leadership within the zones to let the captive population depart.

Containment is not an acceptable alternative to asylum. Refugee protection is about more than bare physical safety. It should contribute to the resolution of the instability suffered by the individual victim of war or persecution. Such protection would be seriously devalued if governments were to insist that refugees had a reasonable protection option in safety zones of the kind looked at here. Even in terms of the minimum requirement for physical security, many of the safe areas have simply not been safe.

In Bosnia and in Rwanda, securi-

Commentators have already warned that designating safe areas gives governments a pretext for refusing to grant asylum.

UNHCR J. Loos

A 'safe humanitarian zone': internally displaced persons in Kaduba, Rwanda, in August 1994.

ty zones at best provided temporary safety and humanitarian relief to hundreds of thousands of people threatened with murder, forcible return to danger, military attack or siege. That contribution was important. But at worst, decisive action to redress the underlying causes of suffering was postponed because of reliance on the provision of relief and on the interim, unstable safety mechanism of the safe areas.

UNHCR's official statements on the value of safety zones have been extremely cautious. In 1991, the agency's Note on International Protection stated that "protection of persons inside their country of origin is feasible *when accompanied by necessary guarantees*... In-country protection *needs to be weighed against the right of individuals to leave their own country, to seek and enjoy asylum, or return on a voluntary basis, and not to be compelled to remain in a territory where life, liberty or physical integrity is threatened.*"

There are many obvious reasons to continue exploring ways in which people's safety can be preserved in their own country. In doing so, however, care must be taken to avoid naive assumptions about the degree of protection which can be provided by an international presence operating without effective enforcement. Safety zones are an interim measure, not a solution. Consent to their establishment is indispensable but may be increasingly difficult to achieve. The experience of Bosnia indicates that it is indulgent to expect warring parties to comply with security zones that lack both consent and a credible enforcement threat.

KARIN LANDGREN

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(Article adapted from the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF REFUGEE LAW, Vol. 7, #3).

UNHCR / R. Le Mo

Internally displaced people and local residents live among the ruins of Gorazde, in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Back to the future

Jela M. is building a brand new life in her old hometown, and UNHCR hopes that thousands more will soon follow her brave footsteps back to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

One day in April 1994, some 20 months before the Dayton Peace Agreement, the chain-smoking, straight-talking widow decided she could no longer tolerate life among Bosnia's estimated 1 million internally displaced persons. Jela and her son packed up their meager belongings and headed back across the front lines of central Bosnia to their burned-out home in war-ravaged Travnik — ignoring warnings that they would be among a very small minority of Bosnian Croats in a supposedly hostile, Muslim-controlled town.

"When I first came back, the police asked for my papers and registration and would have sent me back," recalled Jela, a big, exuberant woman always ready to opine on what ails Bosnia and the world. "But I told them, 'you fellows just try to stop me, if you dare and if you can!'"

Today, Jela and her son are staying in her brother's house in Travnik as she tries to scrape together enough money to fix up her own burned and roofless home next to a small plum orchard across the road. Life is difficult for a returnee, she says, but acknowledges it could be a lot worse.

"Apart from needing money and building materials, I have had no problems whatsoever," Jela said. "We have been well-treated."

Despite the bitter fighting that had raged between Muslims and Croats around Travnik, Jela and her Muslim neighbors got along fine upon her return. When she first arrived, one of her old Muslim friends stopped by to ask what she needed to get settled. "I didn't have a thing and I asked for kitchen utensils," she recalled. "He brought me everything. His simple gifts were like gold, and his friendship is like gold.

"The Croats and Muslims who were friends before are still friends," she added. "We are the same as before; I am the same. In the three parts of Bosnia — Croat, Serb and Muslim — there are many roses, but all this intrigue and war also brought out the weeds."

The world is hoping that the entire garden will soon be blooming with roses, and that stories like Jela's will become commonplace as UNHCR this spring begins one of the most complicated return and repatriation programs it has ever conducted. Under the Dayton Agreement signed last December, UNHCR is responsible for the return and repatriation of more than 2 million people who were forced to flee their homes in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war. About half of them left Bosnia and became refugees, crossing international borders to seek safety in the neighboring republics of former Yugoslavia and some 25 other countries outside the region. The other half remained internally displaced within Bosnia itself, often living in extremely difficult conditions.

Although repatriation will be a new — and welcome — facet of its work in Bosnia, UNHCR is not a newcomer to the region, nor is it new to the task of repatriation. From Cambodia to Guatemala and Mozambique, the agency has helped millions of refugees return home in recent years. And it has been the lead U.N. humanitarian agency in Bosnia and the neighboring republics throughout the war, providing well over 1 million metric tons of assistance to more than 3.5 million beneficiaries in all five republics.

Of all UNHCR programs involving internally displaced persons (IDPs), former Yugoslavia has perhaps been the most problematic — and by far the biggest and most high-profile of them all. When UNHCR was asked by the Secretary-General to take the lead humanitarian role in the region in late 1991, few imagined that the conflict would grow so big, that the victims would eventually number so many, and that within months the program would be costing UNHCR so much — nearly $1 million a day.

When UNHCR was asked to take the lead role in 1991, few imagined that the war would grow so big, that the victims would number so many, and that the program would cost so much.

To be sure, there were many misgivings within UNHCR from the very start, particularly among those who worried about the agency becoming deeply involved in an operation that dealt with IDPs in a Europe that was increasingly closing its borders to asylum-seekers. Critics said that by agreeing to work inside the country of origin — helping people to remain at home or as close to home as possible — UNHCR was in effect "containing" potential refugee movements and taking the pressure off asylum-weary European states. It was certainly very evident that donor governments were more than willing to ante up hundreds of millions of dollars to pay for UNHCR's in-country operations.

From an agency long used to protecting and assisting refugees once they had reached the relative safety of an asylum country, UNHCR soon found itself squarely in the middle of a war zone in the worst refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. UNHCR humanitarian staff, most of whom had never worn a flak vest and helmet or ridden in an armored vehicle, suddenly found themselves caught in the crossfire while trying to help, not refugees, but millions of IDPs and other "war affected" people in besieged communities like Sarajevo, Gorazde and Bihac. Twelve were killed in UNHCR operations, and dozens were wounded. By 1993, UNHCR found itself, for the first time in its 40-year-history, caring for almost the entire population of a country, in the midst of a conflict that the international community appeared powerless to stop. There seemed to be no way out.

One of the main lessons to be learned from Bosnia — and one that High Commissioner Sadako Ogata repeatedly stressed — is that UNHCR's humanitarian work must never be seen as a substitute for a political solution.

"Unfortunately, for much of the war, our humanitarian work did provide a far too convenient substitute for any significant political action aimed at actually stopping the bloodshed," said UNHCR's Sarajevo-based Special Envoy, Soren Jessen-Petersen. "While the international community spent four years grappling with the difficult questions of whether and how it should intervene, we humanitarian agencies and UNPROFOR (U.N. Protection Force) were left ▶

holding the fort in Bosnia. It's no secret that some of us felt used — a humanitarian alibi for political inaction and indecision."

UNHCR is hoping that millions of people like Jela M. will start going home this spring when the return program in Bosnia begins in earnest. Initially, most of the returnees are expected to be IDPs within Bosnia itself who will either go to their original homes — a relatively straightforward proposition — or relocate to other areas where they will be part of the majority. Those IDPs and refugees who wish to return to an area where they will be part of the minority ethnic group — a much more complicated process — are expected to move later.

For planning purposes, UNHCR is assuming that up to half of the 1 million IDPs in Bosnia, as well as some 370,000 refugees from outside Bosnia, could return in 1996. But those maximum planning figures are based on the assumption that the conditions for return will be optimal. This means that many other players — domestic and international — are going to have to carry out their responsibilities in the region; everything from implementing all the Dayton Accords to removing millions of mines and beginning a massive reconstruction and rehabilitation effort estimated at more than $5 billion.

In addition to the 1 million IDPs in Bosnia who receive help, UNHCR also aids another 1.4 million "war-affected" people inside the republic, many of whom still live in their original homes but who have no means of support. As the peace plan firmly takes hold, reconstruction progresses and the economy gathers steam, it is expected that the dependency of these beneficiaries will decrease and UNHCR will be able to increasingly shift its focus from relief to return.

The return program is expected to take more than two years. UNHCR's budget for 1996 is $353 million, the biggest single portion of an 11-agency U.N. consolidated appeal seeking a combined total of $823 million for the year. Between half and three-quarters of UNHCR's portion is related to the return and repatriation program.

One of the first UNHCR-assisted returns of internally displaced people took place in Sarajevo in early March when some 6,000 predominantly Muslim returnees began going back to their original homes in the Vogosca suburb of Sarajevo. Vogosca reverted from Bosnian Serb to Federation control, under the Dayton Agreement. Most of the Serbs left prior to the handover, often leaving nothing behind for the Muslims who would be returning to their homes. Under a $30 million emergency shelter program, UNHCR provided the returnees with building and repair materials so they could make their damaged homes habitable.

> "We should put all those politicians in a room and let them fight it out among themselves."

But Muslims and Croats aren't the only IDPs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Well over 400,000 Bosnian Serbs have also been displaced and are currently living in very difficult conditions throughout northern and eastern parts of the country. UNHCR has continually emphasized that programs to rebuild Bosnia-Herzegovina must be even-handed or the whole peace process could be jeopardized.

In northern Bosnia's Banja Luka region, for example, there are an estimated 220,000 displaced Serbs — 100,000 from Federation-controlled central Bosnia, and 120,000 who were displaced by fighting in western Bosnia in August and September of last year. These people are currently receiving assistance from UNHCR Banja Luka and other agencies, along with some 60,000 Serb refugees from nearby Croatia and more than 130,000 "war-affected" local residents who need help.

Of the 220,000 IDPs and 60,000 refugees in the Banja Luka region, some 264,000 live in private accommodation and 15,000 are in collective centers. All of them are anxious to begin rebuilding their lives.

By early March, an estimated 40,000 internally displaced people and refugees had returned to their homes in Bosnia. More than 10,000 refugees returned, with assistance from UNHCR, from the Kuplensko camp in Croatia to areas around Bihac and Velika Kladusa. And several thousand Serb IDPs in February began going back to their homes in the Mrkonjic Grad-Sipovo area of northwestern Bosnia, which had just reverted to Republika Srpska control under the Dayton Agreement.

In early February, UNHCR field officers also confirmed that a handful of displaced Bosnian Serbs had returned to their hometown of Breza, in Federation territory. About 21,000 people currently live in Breza — 20,000 of them Muslims. Only 270 of the original 5,000 Serbs who lived in the town remain. The few Serbs who had returned reported no major security problems. One Serb family found their house occupied by a displaced Muslim family. The two families sat down in the kitchen together and, over coffee, began discussing how they could solve their problems. Their ability to work together would be much appreciated by Jela M., back in Travnik, who is a firm believer in the common sense of the common man and woman.

"Those politicans who say they speak for us — don't you believe them," Jela declared. "They don't speak for me and they don't speak for most people — Muslim, Serb or Croat. We should put all those politicians in a room and let them fight it out among themselves. Then the rest of us could get on with our lives."

Victoria Graham
Mans Nyberg, Ron Redmond

Home is where the hurt is

Being forced into flight totally disrupts the lives of the internally displaced, exactly as it does to refugees. But unlike many refugees, the world's millions of internally displaced persons often have nowhere to turn. They remain trapped in the same unsafe environment from which they tried to flee. In situations of internal strife, by definition, the civilian government functions partially or not at all; and the civilian population, victimized by a conflict which often has nothing to do with it, is ignored or treated with hostility by both sides.

A definition submitted to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights defines the internally displaced as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee their homes or places of habitual residence suddenly or unexpectedly as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."

Today, there are an estimated 30 million internally displaced people in the world — double the number of refugees. In many places, they are all but forgotten by the international community.

Although there are few refugees in Latin America, there are up to 3 million internally displaced persons in the region, including as many as 480,000 in Peru and 600,000 in Colombia. In both countries, a combination of political and socio-economic factors, such as excessively unequal income distribution, drug-trafficking and heavy involvement of the army in the political scene, have resulted in high levels of violence and a climate that fosters human rights abuses. Whether manifested as an ongoing conflict between the armed forces and the armed opposition (the case of Peru), or a constant armed struggle between rebel and paramilitary groups (the case of Colombia), violence has caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of rural peasants and indigenous people. The internally displaced often lead a very precarious existence, and they are highly appreciative of anyone who pays attention to their plight. This was very evident during a mission led by the Representative of the Secretary-General, Francis M. Deng, to visit displaced people in Peru. An international presence, even as brief as a visit of a couple of hours, can make a big difference. "I want to go with you to the army compound," Delia, a Peruvian woman, told us. "I want them to see that you have come here to listen to what we have to say. Next time I come alone, they'll treat me better; at least they'll know I exist for someone." ▶

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Trapped, with nowhere to turn: internally displaced persons in Peru.

▶ Delia, of Peru's Ashaninka people, has been displaced for the past eight years. She lived with her family and her people in a settlement in the Peruvian *selva* (high-altitude jungle) until their forests were turned into a war zone by the *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) and the Peruvian military. Delia was forced to abandon her home and walk down the river with the others from her village until they reached the provincial capital. She recounted how they lost everything in one night: homes, medicines, traditional food sources. Her own son disappeared, and she never heard from him again. She thinks he must have been taken by the *Sendero*.

Now, homeless and helpless, Delia and her people have to depend on the good will and charity of their remote relatives and of the occasional non-governmental organization. It has been a struggle for Delia, who has tried to obtain better education facilities for the children and to promote small handicrafts projects. And she tries to shield her community from the surrounding conflict by opposing any involvement with the armed opposition or with the *rondas* (a civil defense unit that fights against the *Sendero*). This neutral position, in the context of the conflict, is not a popular one with either side. To their way of thinking, one is either a *rondero* or a *sendero*; there is no middle road. In a conflict zone anything can happen to people like Delia, and she knows it.

Women have been the driving force in efforts to maintain some semblance of normal life in the Peruvian Andes. There, hundreds of thousands of people, mostly Quechua-speakers, were displaced over the last 10 years. Husbands were "disappeared" or killed, and sons had to join the army or the insurgents. The women had to gather their children and flee to urban centers where they could melt into the poverty-stricken anonymity of a shantytown. Now they live in shacks with no water, no electricity and no sewage system. The children get little schooling and spend long days playing in the dirt. Poverty, disease and unemployment make life nearly intolerable. But displaced women have not been idle. They have organized soup kitchens, "mothers' clubs" and handicraft associations to support each other and improve living conditions. Irma, one of the women we talked with, thinks that soon she and her sisters will be able to go back home. "But we'd like our government and the world to give us a hand," she said.

Disparities between the refugees and the internally displaced in the level of help provided can spark conflicts...

Despite the many hardships, the Andean women of Peru are much better off than their displaced counterparts in Colombia. There, the cycle of violence shows no sign of being broken. "You have to realize," said a Catholic priest who works with the displaced, "that the real problem of the displaced is that they come from the wrong villages. In the minds of the army and the paramilitaries, their villages are 'red.' No matter who they were or what they did, they either had to join the paramilitary or leave — or there was no guarantee they would see the light the next day. Those who have left are treated as guerrillas and hunted down, even in the big cities."

Millions face this same dilemma every day in the Andean region and in parts of Central America, Asia, Europe and Africa. Civilians are told either to join the "right" side — whether insurgents, paramilitaries, ethnic or religious minorities or majorities — or to leave. No one is al-

lowed to remain in their home in peace and security.

In Africa, the figures are staggering: up to 16 million people could be internally displaced. In a continent plagued by deadly and seemingly endless conflicts, the needs of the internally displaced are both urgent and immense. They present impossible demands upon humanitarian agencies, which have to make excruciating decisions on whom to help and whom to exclude. Such decisions are naturally based on the mandate of the agencies. UNHCR, for instance, does not have a general mandate to provide protection and assistance to the internally displaced, and can do so only under very specific circumstances. Inevitably, resources may not be sufficient to cover the needs of the internally displaced as well.

An estimated 500,000 of Burundi's 5.5 million people have been displaced. Some have crossed into neighboring countries, but most remain inside Burundi, either clustered around military posts (if they are of the same Tutsi ethnicity as the military) or dispersed in the hills (if they are Hutus). Whether Tutsi or Hutu, they live in the memory of the massacres of the last few decades, and the constant fear of new outbreaks of genocidal attacks. Every day some of them are killed, and others die of malnutrition or malaria. Abuses against women range from seeing one's children or husband killed to being raped. A whole generation of children is being raised in a culture of revenge and hatred.

Human rights organizations have repeatedly called for an end to "impunity," a term that encapsulates the total absence of a functioning judicial system. Without such a system, the perpetrators of atrocities — of either side — are never brought to justice. Apart from the threat such persons pose continuously to society, the lack of accountability fosters the emergence of new perpetrators. Retaliatory killings occur every day in Burundi.

Next to the camps of the displaced in Burundi are camps housing Rwandan refugees. Where UNHCR, mandated to care for the refugees, is involved, the situation is marginally better; it is to this "margin" that many displaced people owe their lives and those of their children. For example, huts are arranged around cooking fires and are provided with plastic sheeting; medical facilities are available and the food distribution is organized. Disparities between the refugees and the internally displaced in the level of humanitarian assistance provided to them can spark conflicts that have a detrimental effect on overall security.

In the absence of UNHCR or some other international organization, local NGOs step in to help the internally displaced. In some countries, Sri Lanka for example, there is a tradition of a pluralistic and vigorous non-governmental sector. NGOs supply much-needed housing materials, emergency food and medicine and some protection. In a protracted conflict like Sri Lanka's — where UNHCR does have an active presence — the role of the NGO community can be vital to the internally displaced. Even though the assistance the NGOs can provide is dismally inadequate in comparison with the actual needs, in many cases it is the only available source of support.

During a mission to eastern Sri Lanka, we found a large settlement of displaced persons huddled around a church compound. A nun, Mother Fransisca, said there were perhaps 3,000 people there, all of them displaced by the fighting between the Tamil Tigers and the government. "There is a long way to peace, and peace must be everyone's aim," Mother Fransisca said. "Human rights are forgotten ideals in these times and places and the displaced need everything."

Indeed. The displaced are often the forgotten victims of conflict and our brief presence with them would seem to us to contribute very little to easing their plight. But, as Delia said in far-off Peru, even if the world is doing little, at least someone knows they exist.

Visitors give voice to the voiceless.

Maria Stavropoulou (Schuppert)

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by the United Nations.

Horn of Africa

Out of sight, out of mind

In early 1992, the civil war in Sudan produced a tragic, new group of refugees who — for a time, at least — focused international attention on the victims of conflict in the Horn of Africa. Some 12,500 young Sudanese boys, many of them kidnapped from their families and forced to join a rag-tag children's army, sought refuge in Kenya after wandering for five terrifying years across Sudan and Ethiopia.

Today, four years after their arrival in Kenya, the plight of these boys and the hundreds of thousands of other refugees and internally displaced people in Horn of Africa is all but forgotten. But they are still there, just some of the millions of people forced from their homes by conflict, internal political strife and the effects of drought.

The largest number of IDPs is in Sudan, created by that country's civil war, which reignited in 1982. The U.S. Committee for Refugees puts the number of displaced persons in Sudan at between 3.5 and 4 million people, most of them living desperately on the edge of disaster.

Depending upon which estimates are used, IDPs in the countries of the Horn could number up to another 1 million persons, mainly in Somalia.

In Sudan, a country at war with itself even before its independence in 1956, many saw disaster looming long ago. In 1988, the late James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, began shuttle negotiations first with the government in Khartoum and then with the rebel leaders in the south, which finally brought agreements for a cross-border relief operation. Kenya became the focus of the cross-border effort for the south, while another assistance program was started out of Khartoum, to assist war-affected populations with food and other urgently needed medical supplies.

Relief aid to the people of Sudan is now overseen by Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), a joint UNICEF/World Food Program (WFP) initiative. But despite its five-year existence, relief activities in Sudan are a stop-gap initiative, barely staving off the effects of war and collapse of the local economy.

WFP currently targets some 61,000 metric tons of food aid to more than 2 million people — Sudanese who, according to OLS, will find it difficult or impossible to survive during the upcoming "hungry months" from April to August.

Philip O'Brien, who recently stepped-down as Coordinator of OLS' southern sector, warns that Sudan's civil war, and particularly internecine fighting among rival rebel armies, has destroyed local grain stores and forced people from their traditional grazing and fishing grounds.

As the latest stage of Sudan's conflict enters its 14th year, there has also been an alarming trend of abductions of relief workers and hostage-taking, OLS reports. Over 1995, nearly 40 aid workers were taken hostage in three separate incidents, and OLS was forced to conduct more than 40 emergency evacuations of relief workers from locations in southern Sudan.

More than 35 international and Sudanese non-governmental organizations now work under the OLS umbrella, fielding some 200 aid workers inside southern Sudan, with more based out of the capital, Khartoum.

Security for U.N. and NGO workers is a prime concern for OLS staff, the same problem faced by UNHCR and other agencies in nearby Somalia, where UNHCR has run a cross-border operation from Kenya since 1992, while also maintaining a permanent presence in Hargeisa, northwest Somalia.

"We don't lack a capacity to do programs," said O'Brien, who now heads UNICEF's emergency unit from New York. "[Problems are] more related to funding and security."

And just as UNHCR finds donor interest in Somalia difficult to maintain — despite having successfully repatriated more than 42,000 refugees from Kenya in 1995 — a major roadblock for OLS lies with donor contributions. If funds are not available when security conditions on the ground permit access, then little can be achieved and people go hungry.

"We need money to keep the operation going," O'Brien said. "Needs are not met to let the operation run successfully."

Assisting the internally displaced and other people affected by the general collapse of services due to Sudan's war is not cheap. OLS will require some $107.6 million in 1996 for food aid and a variety of other activities, including health programs, guinea worm eradication campaigns, and livestock and veterinary programs targeting a total of 4.2 million beneficiaries in both the north and south of the country.

In Somalia, UNHCR works to enhance the capacity of communities to cope with the strain brought on by the arrival of returnees and the presence of thousands of internally displaced persons.

Recent organized repatriation operations have come from Kenya, but spontaneous movements have also reduced refugee numbers considerably in neighboring countries. Such spontaneous movements also serve to help relay information about the safety of clan areas back to refugees. Repatriation operations in 1996 are also expected to include refugee movements from Ethiopia, Yemen and Djibouti.

UNHCR has been assisting people to return to northwest Somalia, although insecurity in the area in 1995 prevented any organized movement. Regardless of the periodic lack of humanitarian space, Kyaw Zin Hla, head of UNHCR's North West Somalia office in Hargeisa, believes the organization can do more to work with the clan system to assist people to return home.

"Political boundaries do not mean that much," said Hla, noting the nomadic lifestyle of many people in the region. "Clan boundaries are more flexible, more important. This has more positive effects on repatriation."

David Lambo, UNHCR's Regional Liaison Representative in Addis Ababa, says this nomadic lifestyle means there will always be people on the move in the Horn of Africa.

"There is a solution, I believe, to the refugee situation," Lambo said. "But the countries will always have to deal with an exceptionally mobile population that does not respect borders. It's something that has always gone on. Nomads will always look for pasture and water availability, but political crises in countries like Somalia have exacerbated this."

Like OLS, UNHCR must work continually to attract donor interest in its operations to assist Somali refugees and returnees. In 1996, UNHCR's North West Somalia operations and the Kenya-based Cross-Border Operation will require a combined total of some $13 million. This is a relatively small sum, but donor interest has so far been minimal. Operations in 1995 had to be funded out of monies borrowed from UNHCR's general voluntary repatriation fund.

UNHCR North West Somalia and the Cross-Border Operation design and implement rehabilitation activities, Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), in local communities. These small-scale assistance programs are designed to help returnees, new arrivals and local residents alike, and to restore community services neglected during long years of war and internal strife. The establishment of QIPs benefits the entire population, and thus reduces or eliminates animosity toward the returnees.

In 1995, for example, despite poor donor support, UNHCR implemented 35 QIPs in the Kismayo, Sakoweyn, Afmadu and Galcayo regions. Costing between a few hundred to a few thousand dollars each, these projects improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Somalis and gave refugees in countries like Kenya added impetus to repatriate.

Funds went to projects such as a brick works in Wamo, canoe construction in Kismayo, a bakery run by women in Galcayo, and financial support to the Sakoweyn women's group. UNHCR-aided projects assisted residents and returnees alike, making communities more viable and repatriation more plausible. But the lack of donor support in 1995 meant that some 90 projects were not implemented.

While UNHCR did scrape together funds for a 1995 seed distribution program in Jamame and Jilib, it was unable to fund $35,000 worth of farm tools to help farmers plant and those seeds and harvest the produce. Likewise in Badhade and Kismayo, UNHCR provided seeds to locals and returnees — but lacked the $28,000 necessary to fund the distribution of farm tools necessary to ensure a successful harvest.

Peter Kessler

The hungry months are coming: displaced child in southern Sudan.

UNHCR/S. Gaffey

Interview

Cornelio Sommaruga

Blue Hands, Red Cross

An estimated 30 million people are internally displaced as a result of armed conflict. As civilian victims of war, they fall under the protection of international humanitarian law – specifically the Geneva Conventions. ICRC, the guardian of those conventions, works closely with UNHCR, whether in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Russia or the Great Lakes.

Refugees *recently interviewed ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga for his views on that relationship, now and in the future.*

QUESTION: Recently, UNHCR has been increasingly called on to assist people who have been displaced within the borders of their own countries – sometimes even in war zones. These operations do not fall under UNHCR's mandate. They arise from specific requests by the U.N. Secretary-General or the General Assembly and the country concerned. Has this relatively new activity by UNHCR altered the relationship between UNHCR and the ICRC?

ANSWER: It's important to take a look at the mandates. Under the Geneva Convention, the ICRC is responsible for protecting and assisting the victims of armed conflicts – whether international or civil – not just during the conflict itself, but also following it. This is a very vast mandate, covering not only civilians who are victims of armed conflict but also those who have left their country because of those conflicts, and who are called refugees.

ICRC has clearly given priority to UNHCR in terms of the protection and assistance of refugees, as well as refugee-related issues such as repatriation. In terms of people displaced within their own countries, there can be no doubt: ICRC has a mandate, and intends to carry it out. It is a mandate of protection and assistance for these people, who are civilians, who have been forcibly displaced or have fled because of an armed conflict. And in this area, we agree, there is no general mandate for UNHCR. There are specific initiatives by UNHCR resulting from resolutions, notably by the General Assembly and Security Council.

The main issue for us is to seek a good balance with UNHCR, and to define who does what. We certainly do not exclude the possibility -- which is often the reality – that both our agencies may act together to help the internally displaced. Still, such programs need to be undertaken, not on the basis of individual initiatives, but after mutual agreement. The needs of the victims should be the priority. Those needs are so great that we need the synergy that can result from both our agencies working together.

We have a positive dialogue with UNHCR, at every level. We may not always achieve 100 percent agreement, but we do try to reconcile our differences.

Sometimes UNHCR and ICRC divide the workload by geographical area, as in the ongoing operation to assist displaced Chechens. Sometimes the division of labor is by task, as in Tajikistan, where the ICRC assisted people who had fled to the east of the country, and UNHCR helped return them to their homes (along with refugees who were returning from Afghanistan). Are these demarcation lines rational, and do they work well? Is our coordination sound?

The key is to agree on our collaboration. Geographical division may be a relatively easy way to share the tasks, especially in countries undergoing decomposition, where some regions are in conflict and others at relative peace.

Of course, there can be surprises in such situations. In the autumn of 1991, there was already a large number of displaced persons in what was still the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.This was an enormous problem. Bosnia-Herzegovina was not yet at war, at the time. We set out a balance with UNHCR, and we cooperated on that basis. Then war broke out in Bosnia — but we had cooperated, and we continued to do so. Working together in the same situation was possible only thanks to constant coordination. In fact, that cooperation even gave us the possibility to issue common humanitarian appeals to governments. There was one difference, however: ICRC did not use armed UNPROFOR escorts. ▶

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▶ So you do feel that the cooperation between UNHCR and ICRC in Bosnia has been healthy. What are the basic principles that make for sound cooperation?

In Bosnia, as you say, the problems aren't really between UNHCR and ICRC — because the main issue now is return, and our two agencies agree that priority should be given to the displaced persons in Bosnia. We do sometimes have coordination problems with other agencies, however. There's a lot of agitation around Bosnia right now, on the part of many organizations: this can be a positive thing, but can also lead to the risk of overlapping responsibilities and redundancy.

This has led us to insist more emphatically on the necessity of sound coordination. If we want positive results, and if we're serious about coordinating, then, firstly, we need to be clear and transparent with each other. Secondly, we need good communication — we have to talk to each other, in a structured and orderly way. Thirdly, we need mutual trust. We should not assume we would do better than other agencies, in their place. Fourthly, every agency must respect the mandate of every other. Those mandates may need to be precisely defined, if they aren't clear — but once they are defined, they should be respected. Finally, it's not enough to talk: we need to act.

You don't feel that the problem of overlapping responsibilities could be an issue between UNHCR and ICRC?

Obviously, I do sometimes wonder about UNHCR. Where do you go from here? What are UNHCR's future policies? If we have been able to cooperate well till now, it's because, where we may have encountered certain collisions in our respective mandates, we have divided the work. I wonder if this will always be the case, if indeed there are tendencies on the part of UNHCR that may want to assist, basically, civilians in situations that result from armed conflict — wherever they are. I think it's important that we discuss this, because ICRC cannot renounce a mandate that stems from the international community, by the Geneva Conventions.

We can maintain a very good relationship, so long as we are clear with each other. If not, that situation could create frustrations — and this sort of thing is not limited to the upper echelons but permeates down to the field. Both our agencies need the solid cooperation and transparency which exists between our delegations and representatives to continue, in the knowledge that the lines of cooperation are clear, fully discussed and properly endorsed. There are a number of very good examples of cooperation in our recent history, where our joint work has created significant complementarities and synergy.

"Obviously, I do sometimes wonder about UNHCR. Where do you go from here? What are UNHCR's future policies?"

What are some of those examples?

Tajikistan is a good example. Chechnya: after a few initial hesitations, that operation began to work quite well rather quickly. Somalia, in the difficult years: UNHCR looked after people who were outside the country, and their repatriation, while ICRC looked after the internally displaced.

Bosnia is also a good example: there have been ups and downs, but we have been able to go back, look at the issues, discuss them and correct any problems. I can't cite every case! We have also done solid *ad hoc* work together in situations like that of the Vietnamese boat-people, where our Central Tracing Agency was very closely involved.

On the other hand, a few years ago, we did not appreciate the idea that UNHCR would establish a sort of subsidiary of our Central Tracing Agency for unaccompanied minors from former Yugoslavia, with a whole separate tracing system. We were very surprised by that. We would have preferred to see synergy created by concentrating our energies on the existing system — improving it, if necessary, but not creating a parallel alternative.

And, in fact, in Rwanda what has happened on that same issue of unaccompanied minors is rather significant. After a few hesitations in the beginning, when everyone seemed to want to take charge of that problem, we reached agreement. The work is being done under the leadership of ICRC and its Central Tracing Agency. Together, we have managed to established files on 100,000 unaccompanied minors, which include the data that will enable us to identify their families. We have united some 12,000 to 13,000 children with their families.

I was present at one of those reunions, in Kigali. It was an extraordinary event. And it was something that we had succeeded in doing together, each agency working in its own area.

UNHCR and the world's refugees would like to thank
those who have contributed [illegible] among the thousands who reached
[illegible] here:

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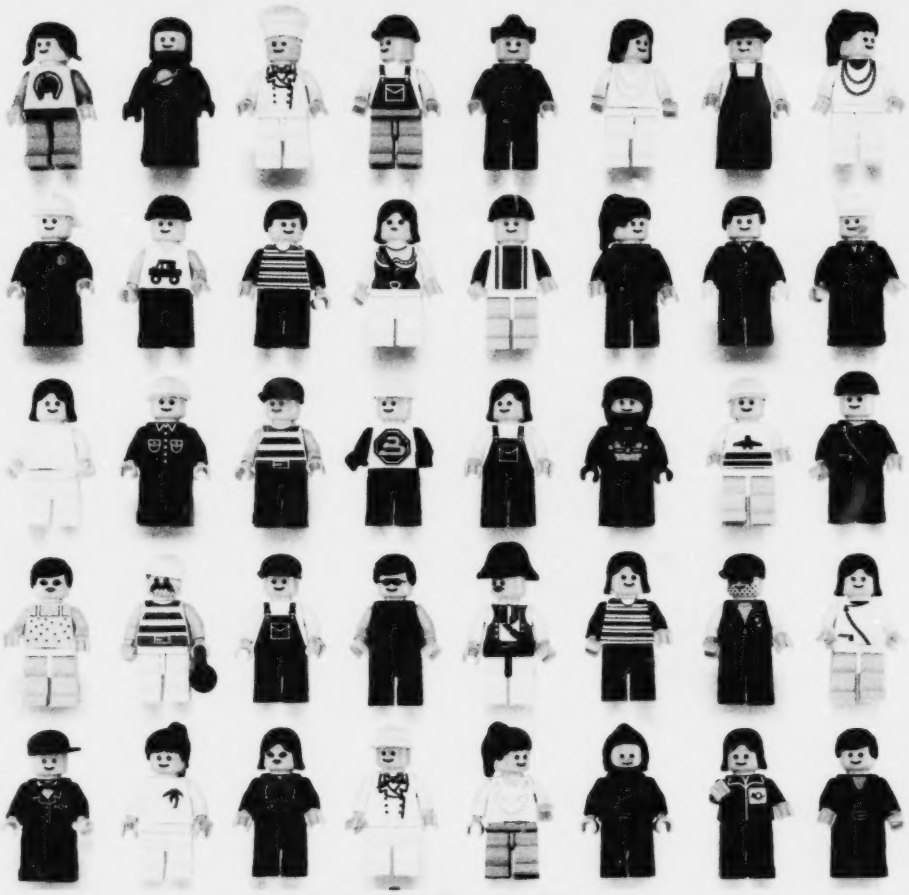

Models courtesy of The LEGO Group.

SPOT THE REFUGEE

There he is. Fourth row, second from the left. The one with the moustache. Obvious really.

Maybe not. The unsavoury-looking character you're looking at is more likely to be your average neighbourhood slob with a grubby vest and a weekend's stubble on his chin.

And the real refugee could just as easily be the clean-cut fellow on his left.

You see, refugees are just like you and me.

Except for one thing.

Everything they once had has been left behind. Home, family, possessions, all gone. They have nothing.

And nothing is all they'll ever have unless we all extend a helping hand.

We know you can't give them back the things that others have taken away.

We're not even asking for money (though every penny certainly helps).

But we are asking that you keep an open mind. And a smile of welcome.

It may not seem much. But to a refugee it can mean everything.

UNHCR is a strictly humanitarian organization funded only by voluntary contributions. Currently it is responsible for more than 27 million people around the world.

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